

The Use of Classical Art and Literature by Victorian Painters, 1860-1912: Creating Continuity with the Traditions of High Art by Rosemary Julia Barrow. Lewiston, NY, Queenston, Ontario, and Lampeter, UK: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007. x, 248 pp. + 5 colour plates, 15 b/w illus. ISBN 0-7734-5443-8. \$109.95; £69.95.

Beware of books with boring titles. They have often originated as that worthy academic exercise designed to demonstrate command of arcane sources and overall stamina, also known as the Ph.D. thesis. The book under review here is no exception. It did indeed start life as a Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of London in May 1999 called “British Classical-Subject Painting 1860-1910.” Back then, Rosemary Julia Barrow admitted in its opening pages that this was no longer virgin territory and went on to name several “classical scholars and social historians ... [who] have informed our understanding of the overall context and the sensibility to which the classical subject movement belonged and contributed.” “Nevertheless,” she boldly claimed, “no serious and systematic examination has yet been attempted of the classical-subject movement as a whole, or of the work of various of its members.” A claim indeed as wrong as it is bold, unless one summarily dismisses scholarship undertaken across the Atlantic as too far away to register on one's personal radar – an impossibility and irony that won't be lost on readers of this journal. In fact, Robyn Asleson's engagingly written and informative Ph.D. thesis, “Classic into Modern: The Inspiration of Antiquity in English Painting, 1864-1918” (Yale, 1993) is nothing if not serious and systematic. It provides an excellent overview of the classical subject movement and its protagonists, of their professional aspirations, networks, and achievements. Asleson hoped that her study would “redirect scholarly attention to the paintings and to kindle enthusiasm for further investigation.” This hope has indeed been fulfilled as a string of influential publications testify. Among them was the ground-breaking catalogue edited by Michael Liversidge and Catharine Edwards, *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century*, which accompanied the exhibition held at the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery in May and June 1996. Since then, attention has mostly focused on individual artists. Publications are too numerous to list, but a few should be mentioned, such as the catalogue to the Alma-Tadema exhibition (Amsterdam and Liverpool, 1996-97), the magisterial volume on Lord Leighton, *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity* (1999) edited by Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn, Robyn Asleson's monograph on Albert Moore (2004), and of course Barrow's own fine book on Alma-Tadema (2001).

It is time to pose the questions Barrow herself sternly refused to ask: where does her endeavour fit into this steady stream of publications? Having wrongly claimed that her thesis was the first systematic study of the classical subject